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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3239

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3104

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3762

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 001007

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DEPUTY FM DISCUSSES HUMAN
TRAFFICKING; RESTRICTIONS ON STUDENTS TO AUCA

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a recent meeting with Charge, Deputy Foreign Minister Wepa Hajiyevev provided his commentary on the Turkmenistan section of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. While acknowledging that more needs to be done to fight TIP, he took issue with the report's failure to recognize the Turkmen government's activity in this area. He cited upcoming regulations for the implementation of the Criminal Procedure Code, ongoing investigations of TIP organizers and the government's efforts to raise public awareness about TIP. He proposed developing a mechanism for cooperation on TIP issues and information sharing. On a second issue, exit restrictions on Turkmen young people headed to Kyrgyzstan for higher education, Hajiyevev explained the Turkmen government's concerns about low standards at many of the higher education institutions in that country. He recognized, however, that the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) has high standards and said he would look into the blanket refusal for permission to depart which is affecting its Turkmen students.
END SUMMARY.

PROSPECTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-TIP LAW

12. (C) On August 7, Charge discussed the Turkmenistan portion of the TIP Report and the government's interference with students headed to AUCA in Bishkek with Deputy Foreign Minister Wepa Hajiyevev. Hajiyevev noted Turkmenistan's Tier Two status and wanted to comment about the trafficking situation in Turkmenistan and the contents of the report. According to Hajiyevev, since 2007 the government has been paying attention to the TIP issue. He acknowledged that the issue demands more efforts and implementation, both in Turkmenistan and elsewhere. Still, he could not agree completely with the text of the report. Citing the 2007 Law on Trafficking in Persons, he agreed that implementing that law was important. Law enforcement officials also understood the need to implement the law. Recently, there was an inter-ministerial meeting at which implementing regulations for the new Criminal Procedure Code were discussed. The goal is to have the draft regulations completed by August 15 and to submit them to British and German experts, in the framework of a German Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) project, to insure that they comply with international

standards. Hajiyeve wanted to call attention to the fact that, concerning TIP legislation, the government was moving forward in cooperation with international experts.

13. (C) Commenting that TIP was a somewhat new topic for Turkmenistan, Hajiyeve noted that it was a new area for law enforcement officials to deal with. He rejected the suggestion that law enforcement officials were not doing anything to prosecute traffickers. According to his discussion with the Prosecutor General, in 2009 several operations to investigate and prosecute TIP organizers in Mary and Lebap provinces have occurred. Their aim was to cut the channels that provide people for trafficking. He mentioned that in 2009, they have also focused on "tourism companies."

TIP PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS -- TURKMEN STYLE

14. (C) Hajiyeve took issue with the report's assessment that the government does not conduct TIP public awareness campaigns. He said the government promotes TIP awareness "in its own way." Instead of television announcements, he said Turkmenistan, as a Central Asian and Muslim country, conducts awareness efforts through social organizations such as the district-level councils of elders, as well as teachers and social activists. They work together with provincial law enforcement officials to assist victims of trafficking and to prevent people from becoming victims by raising awareness.

15. (C) Hajiyeve said it was difficult to determine the scope of the TIP problem involving Turkmenistan. Turkmen consuls

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overseas assisted citizens with problems. For instance, if someone was withholding a Turkmen citizen's passport, the consul, together with host country foreign ministry and law enforcement officials, carried out necessary actions to protect the citizen, including providing a new passport if needed.

OFFER TO WORK JOINTLY ON THE TIP PROBLEM

16. (C) Hajiyeve suggested that the task is complicated and needs more work, but wanted to call attention to work that had been done. He proposed organizing cooperation in the anti-TIP sphere, perhaps a joint activity in order to provide an "objective view" of activities in Turkmenistan. But he noted that for the Turkmen government, the issue was the subject of active interest and that, given its efforts in holding criminals responsible and assistance to TIP victims, it was difficult to understand Turkmenistan's Tier Two ranking. The Turkmen government wants the situation to improve, and Hajiyeve welcomed definite suggestions or proposals. He said the Foreign Ministry's leadership considered it important to provide a wider understanding of the government's anti-TIP efforts by February 2010.

17. (C) The Charge noted that the U.S. approach to TIP applies to all countries. Our task was to give a correct evaluation of the problem in Turkmenistan and a correct presentation of what the Turkmen government was doing. He welcomed the opportunity to work with the appropriate Turkmen government agencies in order to obtain more complete information about the situation. He suggested the formation of a working group between the Embassy and the government that would allow the exchange of TIP experience and information and provide an official source of information for the report. Hajiyeve replied that he would study further the question of a mechanism to clearly determine the scope of the TIP problem. The Turkmen government wanted to give a comprehensive view about what is happening in Turkmenistan. It also needed to make progress now and to work out where it could expand cooperation in this area.

BLOCKING KYRGYZSTAN-BOUND STUDENTS

¶8. (C) Hajiyeve also addressed "rumors" that the Turkmen government interfered with young people going abroad to study. He explained that it was a question of study by Turkmen youth in Kyrgyzstan and did not involve students to other countries, according to his discussions with the Migration Service and Ministry of Education. He cited an increase in the number of Turkmen youth studying in Kyrgyzstan and attributed it, not to high educational standards, but to its low cost. He explained that Turkmen citizens choose from a list of Kyrgyz educational offerings not on the basis of the quality of education or the subjects offered, but strictly on the basis of affordability. He gave the example of a second year student at a college-level institution in the city of Osh who could not give the name of the school, questioning whether such a program could be legitimate. In addition, diplomas should correspond to educational standards in the country where they were issued. Students returning to Turkmenistan with a Kyrgyz diploma lack the possibility of finding work with a diploma that is not recognized in Turkmenistan. This results in complaints from the students.

¶9. (C) According to Hajiyeve, the restriction applied only to Kyrgyz schools. If it is a state institution or an institution with recognized high standards, the Turkmen Ministry of Education would stamp the student's passport and the Migration Service would allow them to depart. He did not see any reason why students could not go to AUCA. They should apply to the Ministry of Education and obtain the necessary stamp. The Turkmen government was working with the Kyrgyz government to set up a new mechanism to handle this issue. Another aspect of this issue was compulsory military

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service. Males who are obtaining higher education are given a postponement until graduation. Male students who wanted to depart to Kyrgyzstan did not present documentation that they had obtained the deferment and were perhaps trying to avoid military service. Hajiyeve also mentioned that some students were especially interested in going to the Ferghana Valley, the cities of Osh and Jalalabad. (NOTE: The implication being that they could be associating with Islamic extremists there. END NOTE)

AUCA MEETS HIGH STANDARDS

¶10. (C) The Charge pointed out that the U.S. Government supports AUCA and gives scholarships to Turkmen students to study there. He emphasized that it was incomprehensible why students should be denied permission by the Ministry of Education to study at AUCA. He urged the Turkmen government to review how the Ministry of Education was handling these cases because Hajiyeve's concerns about the quality of education at some Kyrgyz institutions were not valid with respect to AUCA. Currently, AUCA students are facing a blanket refusal by Turkmen authorities, both males and females. Hajiyeve, apparently caught off guard by the information that AUCA students were being barred from departing, asked for a list of the affected students and said he would look into it.

¶12. (C) The Charge also raised the registration case of the local international school, following up on Under Secretary Burns' discussion of the same topic with Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov during his Ashgabat visit. The Charge mentioned that Meredov had said he would look into the issue, noting that the Embassy had yet to be provided with an explanation as to why the international school has not been registered. He said this lack of information made it impossible to take appropriate measures that could expedite the process. Hajiyeve said he would raise the matter with Meredov.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: On the TIP issue, Hajiyeve was well-briefed and reflected a willingness on the part of the Turkmen government to improve its record. It remains to be seen if

his words translate into access to more complete information and concrete actions along the lines recommended in the TIP report. The Turkmen government is extremely close hold on information, especially when it could cast the country in a negative light. Regarding Turkmen students headed for AUCA, while the concerns about studying in Kyrgyzstan might be valid in some cases, they do not apply to AUCA students, a point which Hajiyevev seemed to acknowledge when the Charge honed in on their situation. Hopefully, the Foreign Ministry will be able overturn the travel ban in time for the start of the school year. END COMMENT.

MILES